



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Winter-readiness information for London schools and nurseries

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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Introduction

As winter approaches, it is important that schools are reminded and updated on important health considerations for their pupils/students, parents/carers and staff.

Pupils and staff in schools are particularly susceptible to infections which increase over the winter months, such as seasonal influenza (flu) and stomach infections (such as norovirus). These can be very infectious and cause outbreaks in school settings due to the close contact amongst pupils and staff. The spread of these illnesses can be limited by improving infection control practices within the school.

Young children and/or those with chronic illnesses and neurodevelopmental disorders are also at risk of developing complications from certain vaccine-preventable infections such as measles and flu. It is important that they are fully immunised to prevent any complications and to reduce the likelihood of outbreaks in a school setting. It is also essential that schools have up to date and easily accessible records of children identified as being in a risk group (see page 5 – Influenza risk groups – for more information). This will ensure that a rapid risk assessment regarding the need for post exposure treatment can be considered in the event of individual cases and/or an outbreak situation.

This briefing provides:

1. Key messages for head teachers on winter preparedness.
2. Two checklists on flu and norovirus readiness and when and how to report outbreaks.
3. Leaflets and further information on flu, norovirus and meningitis.

Key messages for schools on winter preparedness

1. Be prepared ✓

- Ensure your pupils and staff are immunised against flu, where eligible, and have access to personal protective equipment (PPE) (see checklist on page 6).
- Ensure you have compiled a list of children who are at particular risk of developing serious illness from influenza (as outlined below), so that if there is an outbreak you have all of this information to hand to inform a timely risk assessment.
- Ensure your pupils and staff are immunised against measles, mumps and rubella infection (MMR).
- Ensure parents are reminded to exclude their child from school if they have symptoms of flu or diarrhoea and/or vomiting.

2. Recognise outbreaks ✓

3. Report outbreaks promptly to your local health protection team seven days a week ✓

- North West London - 020 3326 1658
- North East and North Central London - 020 3837 7084
- South London - 0344 326 2052

Use the following web link to find details of your local health protection team:

www.gov.uk/health-protection-team

Influenza risk groups

Flu can affect anyone but if you, your staff or children have a long-term health condition the effects of flu can make it worse even if the condition is well managed and you normally feel well. The free flu vaccine is available for those who are pregnant or have one of the following long-term conditions.

Conditions which may increase your risk of serious influenza illness*

- a neurological condition, e.g. multiple sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy or learning disability
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as steroid medication or cancer treatment)
- a kidney disease
- are seriously overweight (BMI of 40 and above).
- diabetes
- pregnancy
- a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
- a problem with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell disease, or you have had your spleen removed
- a heart problem
- had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
- liver disease

This list is not exhaustive.

Source: * [PHE NHSE /Flu_vaccination__A5_booklet.pdf](#)

It is important for the school to maintain an up to date record of all those who fall into the above categories. If you or the parents are unsure if their child's condition falls under one of the risk groups, then advise them to speak with their practice nurse/GP to discuss their concerns and establish if they are in an influenza risk group.

In the event of cases/outbreak, a risk assessment, including consideration of those in the above risk groups, will need to be undertaken ASAP. There will be situations where these individuals may be advised to obtain post exposure medication/immunisation from their GP, but for this to be most effective this needs to occur quickly after their exposure.

More information on the risk groups can be found in the

[DH Green_Book_Chapter7 Immunisation of individuals with underlying medical conditions.pdf](#)

London schools and nurseries planning checklist for seasonal influenza (flu)

Date completed	Completed by	
Suggested time – September/October		
Actions to prepare for cases of seasonal flu	✓	X
Flu vaccination		
1. Do you have any children and/or staff in clinical risk groups (including those with chronic respiratory, cardiac, kidney, neurological disease, neurodevelopmental disorders (learning disability), diabetes, pregnant) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you do, compile a list and establish if the children/staff are to be vaccinated at their GP or at school. This information is essential in facilitating a prompt risk assessment in the event of an outbreak 		
2. Did you know that all 2, 3, 4 year olds and children in Years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are now eligible for the flu vaccination (nasal spray). Children aged 4 to 9 years old (on 31 August 2018), that is those in reception class and school years 1-5, will be offered flu vaccination in schools. Children aged 2 and 3 will be vaccinated by their GP.		
3. Local healthcare teams will be in touch with the school where a school based delivery model has been agreed.		
4. Parental/guardian consent will be required and schools may be asked to assist with collection of the consent forms.		
Respiratory hygiene & infection control precautions		
5. Ensure infection control policies are up to date, read and followed by all staff		
6. Immediately send home staff members and/or pupils who become unwell at the school/nursery and remind them not to return until they are symptom free.		
7. Check that you have procedures for isolating (with appropriate supervision) a child who falls ill during the day until their parents can collect them. This will include a suitable isolation room with hand washing facilities, PPE available if needed (e.g. for staff providing close personal care to an ill child for more than an hour*) – i.e. disposable gloves, aprons and surgical masks (for flu outbreaks), appropriately trained staff and plans in place for transporting children home who would usually use school bus or public transport. The isolation room should be thoroughly cleaned after use.		
8. Reinforce general education for children and staff about washing hands and respiratory hygiene ('catch it, bin it, kill it' message). Use education materials / resources (see resource page)		
9. Ensure disposable tissues are available and staff and children understand the need for using them (whilst waiting for collection) and how to use them e.g. cover nose and mouth with tissue, use tissue, throw away and wash hands.		
10. Ensure liquid soap and disposable paper hand towels are available at each hand washing facility, this includes toileting areas and classrooms and stock levels adequately maintained in anticipation of increased use		
11. Staff to check, encourage and supervise handwashing in young children, and handwashing / use of alcohol gel (where safe) for visitors when arriving and leaving premises		
12. If possible and safe to do so, use alcohol gel in places where handwashing facilities are not available (e.g. entrances/exits, and classrooms under supervision), and maintain supplies in view of increased use		
13. Ensure foot operated bins are in use and in working order		

14. Increase regular cleaning of surfaces, equipment and toys using normal detergent, particularly frequently touched surfaces – taps, door handles, stair rails, light switches, computer keyboards etc. Ensure stock rotation of toys to ensure clean toys always available. Cleaning is recommended twice daily as a minimum in an outbreak and as necessary.		
15. Maintain adequate levels of cleaning materials in anticipation of increased cleaning (e.g. disposable cloths, detergent, PPE)		
Reporting to the local health protection team		
16. Early recognition of an influenza/respiratory illness outbreak amongst staff and/or pupils is vital (i.e. two or more cases linked by time and place).		
17. Outbreaks of influenza/respiratory illness should be reported promptly to the local health protection team. This is to enable them to work with you to risk assess the situation and to establish if any of the particularly at risk children and staff are considered for post exposure advice		
18. Maintain high standards of record keeping in the event of an outbreak of acute respiratory illness to help investigate the outbreak (i.e. list of staff and pupil cases incl. dates of birth, GP details, symptoms, date of onset of symptoms of the first case, total number of pupils in the school, location of cases) and have to hand the documentation of the flu immunisation uptake levels		
19. The health protection team will undertake a risk assessment and provide further advice (e.g. nose/throat swabs required and advice on those in risk groups who may require prompt antiviral treatment).		
Actions to take in the event of a flu outbreak		
20. In the event of a flu outbreak:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourage the sharing of communal toys/equipment. Encourage the cleaning of hands and objects when passing round shared toys. • Suspend use of communal soft toys due to problems with cleaning them adequately. • Do not allow children to share objects that may become contaminated with respiratory secretions (e.g. wind instruments). 		
21. Avoid bringing children together in large crowds in enclosed spaces (e.g. whole school assemblies)		
22. Inform the school nurse and local authority as per local protocol		
23. Display flu posters (exclusion poster, hand washing poster and 'catch it bin it kill it')		
24. Send information to parents informing them that there is an outbreak of flu and reinforcing exclusion criteria i.e. do not send children back to school until they are symptom free, and basic hygiene		

London schools and nurseries planning checklist for norovirus season

Date completed	Completed by	
Suggested Time – September/October		
Actions to prepare for norovirus (winter vomiting bug) season	✓	X
Infection control precautions		
1. Ensure infection control policies are up to date, read and followed by all staff		
2. Check that you have procedures for isolating (with appropriate supervision) a child who falls ill during the day until their parents can collect them. This will include a suitable isolation room with hand washing facilities, PPE if needed, appropriately trained staff and plans in place for transporting children home who would usually use school bus or public transport. The isolation room should be thoroughly cleaned after use.		
3. Ensure that liquid soap and disposable paper hand towels are available in all toilets and classrooms where there are hand washing facilities		
4. Ensure that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available – i.e. disposable gloves, aprons.		
5. Ensure foot operated bins are in use and in working order		
Reporting to the local health protection team		
6. Early recognition of a diarrhoea and/or vomiting (D&V) outbreak amongst staff and/or pupils/student in a school setting is vital (i.e. two or more cases linked by time and place).		
7. Outbreaks of D&V should be reported promptly to the local health protection team for a full risk assessment and further guidance (even if the nursery/school is already aware of local diarrhoea and vomiting outbreak management guidelines).		
8. Maintain high standards of record keeping in the event of an outbreak of diarrhoea and/or vomiting to help investigate the outbreak (i.e. list of staff and pupil cases incl. dates of birth, GP details, symptoms, date of onset of symptoms of the first case, total number of pupils in the school, location of cases).		
Diarrhoea and/or vomiting outbreak control measures		
9. Immediate control measures to be put into place when an outbreak of D&V is recognised are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of cases for 48 hours after any symptoms have ceased, this includes nursery/school staff • Enhanced cleaning of the environment with a hypochlorite solution. • Effective hand washing with liquid soap and water. 		
10. Brief all staff on infection prevention and control measures during the outbreak e.g. during handover sessions throughout the day.		
11. Inform the school nurse and local authority as per local protocol		
12. Maintain high standards of record keeping to investigate the outbreak and help identify the source of the infection by keeping a log (i.e. list of staff and pupil cases including: symptoms and frequency, date of onset of symptoms of the first case, location of cases, number of pupils/staff at the school). These details may be requested if the outbreak is not resolving or bloody diarrhoea is reported.		

13. Remove all alcohol gel in use in the event of a D&V outbreak, as this has limited effectiveness against diarrhoeal diseases		
14. Discourage the sharing of communal toys/equipment. Encourage the cleaning of hands and objects when passing round shared objects/toys. Suspend use of communal soft toys (due to the problems with cleaning them adequately), water, soft dough and sand play. Do not allow children to share objects that may become contaminated.		
15. Increase regular cleaning of surfaces, equipment and toys using normal detergent, particularly frequently touched surfaces – taps, door handles, stair rails, light switches, computer keyboards etc. Ensure stock rotation of toys to ensure clean toys always available. Cleaning is recommended twice daily as a minimum in an outbreak and as necessary.		
16. Ensure pupils/staff are encouraged to seek advice from a healthcare provider and have samples taken		
17. Send information to parents informing them that there is an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting at the nursery/school and reinforce exclusion criteria (48hours after last symptoms) and basic hygiene		
18. During an outbreak restrict visitors to the school as much as possible and any visitors should be advised of the outbreak and the need for thorough hand washing prior to leaving the school.		
19. Consider suspending visits to other schools and any organised school events, etc. until the outbreak is declared over (48 hours of no new cases at the school which includes both staff and pupils).		

Resources

Flu Resources

Checklist

See checklist on pages 7 and 8 for actions to prepare for seasonal influenza.

Leaflet - Flu vaccination: who should have it this winter and why

www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-who-should-have-it-this-winter-and-why

Leaflet – Protecting your child against flu: Information for parents

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714954/PHE_Protecting_Child_Flu_DL_leaflet.pdf

Poster – 5 reasons to vaccinate your child against flu

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714952/PHE_Flu_5_reasons_poster_2018.pdf

Immunising primary school children against flu – information for head teachers and other school staff

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716261/PHE_Flu_immunising_primary_school_children_briefing_for_headteachers_.pdf

Leaflet - Flu leaflet for people with learning disability

An easy to read leaflet providing information on influenza (flu) and vaccination.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/530741/9833_PHE_Flu-learning-disability-A4-8pp-6-WEB.pdf

Further information and leaflets on flu can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme

Norovirus Resources

Checklist

See checklist on pages 9 and 10 for actions to prepare for the winter vomiting bug (norovirus) and what to do in an outbreak.

Poster

Further information is available in this norovirus poster and can be displayed for staff and visitors

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322947/Stop_norovirus_spreading_this_winter_leaflet.pdf

Meningitis

Leaflets

These leaflets describe meningitis and the benefits of vaccination

Signs and symptoms poster

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningitis-signs-and-symptoms-poster>

Protect yourself against meningitis and septicaemia – In school years 9 to 13

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543950/PHE_9909_MenW_leaflet.pdf

Meningitis and septicaemia – new school leaver flyer

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/617266/MenACWY_school_leaver_flyer.pdf

Meningitis and septicaemia – Important information for new university entrants in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningitis-and-septicaemia-poster-for-new-university-entrants>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningitis-and-septicaemia-leaflet-for-new-university-entrants>

Further information for Higher Education can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582511/MenACWY_HEI_Guidelines.pdf

Further information on meningitis can be found on the NHS choices website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/meningitis/pages/introduction.aspx